

S.A. begins to bring arts plan into effect

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City officials Tuesday launched the implementation phase of an arts plan formerly known as the Cultural Collaborative — now tentatively re-dubbed "SA...SA."

Accepted by the City Council in June, the planning document proposed to "support the growth and recognition of San Antonio's creative economy" through a wide range of policy, staffing and funding recommendations.

In the city's 2005-06 budget, the council met the plan's initial financial objectives by boosting the arts' share of hotel occupancy tax revenue from about 9 percent to 12 percent — an increase of about \$1 million to \$3.4 million.

Felix Padron, director of the city's cultural affairs office, said a 16-member implementation committee, drawn from business, arts organizations and creative individuals, would begin meeting in two weeks. That committee's job includes deciding which of the plan's strategies to push in the short term and how to implement them.

"I would be hesitant to say today what the strategies will be," Padron said. "We will have some strong recommendations in public art, neighborhoods, small-business assistance and a feasibility study for the potential of some of our cultural facilities."

According to a color brochure distributed at Tuesday's announcement, "SA...SA is short for 'What makes San Antonio ... San Antonio.'"

"SA...SA" has been presented to the City Council as a re-branding and public awareness campaign for the cultural plan, but Mayor Phil Hardberger expressed reservations.

"I don't know that the re-branding campaign is a done deal," Hardberger said. "The council, including myself, had some concerns about it. It could be quite tawdry."

Aside from that, Hardberger reiterated his support for the arts as an arm of city economic policy.

"The great thing about a vibrant art scene ... is that it makes you a smarter city. Smarter cities get ahead in this world. More creative cities get ahead in this world. ... If you're not on the cutting edge, you're falling behind," Hardberger said.

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